



Optimizing reflection as a teaching and learning tool in community-university partnerships

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Summary

Graduates from institutions of higher education in the 21st century must function in environments characterized by rapid turnover of information, constant evolution of technology, permeability of disciplinary boundaries, and emergence of new fields of inquiry. Additionally, graduates will inherit a world with a web of complex and urgent problems (e.g., destruction of our planet and inequities in opportunity).

These challenges form the backdrop for consideration of how learners learn best, finding the balance between didactic and experiential learning, and pursuing learning that is contextualized, values-based, and developmentally appropriate. It is generally agreed that guided reflection supports each of these objectives while also providing a measure of autonomy often lacking in didactic teaching. Reflection has been shown to help students embrace uncertainty, learn in situations sans right answer, and consider the "hidden curriculum" (Furco, 2010). But given the personal, sometimes intimate and arguably subjective

nature of reflection, how can reflections be reviewed and assessed in order to serve standardized as well as individual learning agendas?

A review of the literature on reflection supports several emergent themes: critical analysis of experiences, search for deeper meaning, active construction of meanings, guides for future action, and modalities for affectivity. Given the central place of reflection in service-learning and the work of educators who have promoted reflection as a critical element of deep learning, it is noteworthy that there are multiple unanswered questions about reflection. Research is needed to fully characterize the cognitive dimensions of reflection; to measure learner, teacher, and societal outcomes; and to define methodological and operational aspects of reflective engagement between learner and teacher. In order to build this base, it would be helpful to consider developing a generally agreed upon reflection taxonomy.

We propose a taxonomy that can contribute to building the research and scholarship base for reflective teaching and learning.

References

There were no references provided with this proposal.

{Please note—there is a PDF to upload to the wiki. It's the reflection model associated with this proposal.}

As depicted in the figure below [see uploaded file entitled, Taxonomy], the four domains include: Descriptive, Interpretive, Explorative, and Directive. Working up from the bottom of the pyramid the domains evolve from concrete to abstract and analytical to action oriented. On a perpendicular coordinate the taxonomy includes locus such that each of the four domains has both an internal and external dimension.